3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

Dance.[3] Women could vow the Old Women's Dance, but no other Dance could be vowed by women of any age.

The vower would call upon his company or age-society to help him fulfill his vow. As elsewhere explained, when the young boy was about 15 to 17 years old he together with others of his age joined in a body one or other of the two Soldier Societies, the Stars of the Wolves. Each such newly joining group of youths would be incorporated in the larger society of Stars or Wolves, but would keep its own identity through life as a subdivision of the Stars or Wolves, would have its own name (such as Potbellies, Calves, Holding-On-to-Dogs-Tail), and would hang together in common loyalty, protection and helpfulness.[3]

The vower's company, not all the Stars of Wolves, would help him make provision for the Dance, would be in charge of the affair and, during it and only during it, could exercise certain definite authority over other members of the tribe. If the tribe were on the march toward the spot where the dance was about to be held, that company came immediately after the Flat Pipe, according to The Boy, and during the Dance the band chiefs and Pipe keepers stepped aside and yielded to the company the authority to run the camp, compel attendance, give orders, and punish disobedience. If during a Sacred Lodge an individual hunted buffalo out of turn, before the communal hunt began, his lodge would be destroyed, his clothes cut up, and so forth. A like punishment might be meted out to any who might refuse to come into camp, at the time the dance was held.[4]

The two Soldier Societies, the Stars and Wolves, and their respective constituent companies were permanent organizations. The specific individuals who vowed or joined in any given Dance

[3] In 1948, The Boy indicated that probably the Crazy, Dog, Kit-fox and Drum Dances would have been vowed in order, that is, that a man would vow a Dog Dance only if he had been previously a Crazy Dancer, and so on. He was none too sure on this point. He was quite emphatic, however, that any man who belonged to either the Stars or Wolf Men could vow the Sacrifice Dance. [R.F.]

[4] For a description of the whole ceremonial organization, so far as it can be reconstructed, see Flannery, 1953, pp. 36-43.

[5] See Flannery, 1953, pp. 43-44.

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

575 did not constitute such. Their grouping was a purely temporary
●701 one, lasting only for the duration of the Dance. During, for in-
*796 stance, the Crazy Dance, all who joined in it, both members of the vower's company and others, were called Crazy Dancers, but once the Dance was over, they ceased to be such; there was no permanent organization or society of Crazy Dancers.

608 A first step which a man who had vowed a Sacred Dance had
*796 to take was to fill an ordinary pipe, go to a man who had gone through the rite in fulfillment of a vow and who knew the rite well, and offer him the pipe, saying: "Here is the pipe. You will be my 'grandfather.'" By accepting the pipe,—and he could hardly refuse,—the latter became the vower's ritual "grandfather." At the same time the "grandfather's" wife became the vower's "grandmother," and both the vower and his wife (or wives) became "grandchildren" of the "grandfather" and his wife, and they addressed one another respectively by these names. The vower himself was in charge of the Dance and of the preparations therefor. The "grandfather's" role was that of liturgist, to instruct the vower in the ceremonies and observances proper to the given Lodge, and to see that they were carried out correctly. By way of exception, for the Old Women's Dance there were "grandmothers," but no "grandfathers."

When a given individual vowed one of the Sacred Lodges, other individuals could join with him in the rite, and each of these others would also choose a "grandfather,"—one who had participated in the given Dance,—with whom he (and his wife) would contract the same sacred relationship and who would perform the same offices. No person could be "grandfather" to more than one vower or associate on the occasion of any one dance.[1] The "grandfathers" would usually be older than the participants but not by any means necessarily very old men.

If, however, a younger man offered a pipe to a very feeble old man whose memory of the rites was poor, the old man might accept the pipe and so become the younger man's "grandfather."

[1] In 1948, The Boy indicated that for the Crazy Dance at least two younger men might together approach an older man and have him act as their ritual grandfather if he accepted them. [R.F.]

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

608 The problem of possible abuses of the system was explained by The Boy along the following lines. "First of all if an old man had become my 'grandfather' only recently, say just last week and I were a young man, no one would ordinarily ask me to appeal for him to my 'grandfather.' By strict right I could do so, and if no one else were available, I might be asked, but as an 'amateur,' as one lacking in experience, I would not be a good person to ask. An older, more experienced 'grandson' would be asked."

*796 Besides choosing a "grandfather" the vower also selected, as a herald or crier for the Dance, some intelligent old man gifted as an 203 orator. The crier's chief task was to walk or ride around the camp before and during the Dance announcing to the people whether the group would move and other decisions and agreements covering preparations for and procedure during the dance.

If the bands happened to be scattered at the time a sacred Dance was to be held, runners were sent by the vower to bid them foregather for the Dance. All members of the tribe were obliged to attend the Sacrifice and Crazy Dances, and pretty surely the Drum, Kit-fox and Dog Dances. As regards the Fly Dance, this was ordinarily held in connection with one of the other Dances, so everybody would be present anyhow. As regards the Old Men's and Old Women's Dances, they were not so lively or colorful, and were held a little apart and the people did not take much interest in them and "did not go much" to them; attendance was apparently not required.

*796 If any individual or group failed to come when summoned, the vower would request the soldiers of the Stars or Wolves as the 626 case might be, compel attendance.[9] Even a war party could not ●701 start out if some one had vowed a dance and it was about ready to begin. So much for the types or personnel,—vower, associates, age-groups, ceremonial "grandfathers," criers, police, and "congregation,"—more or less common to all the Sacred Lodges. Personnel peculiar to particular Dances will be taken up later when each is described. Before describing the Dances one by one, some ritual observances common to all or many of them may be noted.

*796 After the vower of a Dance had chosen his ritual grandfather

[9] For a detailed illustration of this point, see Flannery, 1953, pp. 49-51.

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

be on the night immediately preceding the beginning of the Dance rite proper.

Usually others besides the principal vower would vow to join the dance and to pierce their breasts with skewers. These associate vowers would also choose each his own grandfather and, with the help of his own crier, have the same formal public announcement made of his vow as in the case of the principal vower.

As proximate preparation for the Dance, if the bands were scattered at the time, the principal vower would send out young men as runners to summon the bands to foregather for the dance. Attendance was obligatory for all.

The principal vower set up his lodge in the center of the camp circle, and here headquarters were established where conferences of the vower and his assistants were held and whence pro tem laws and regulations, decisions when and whether to move camp, and so forth, were issued.

The vower's chief assistants in these matters were his own age-group or company, a component sub-group of either the Wolves or the Stars. Whether all the Wolves or Stars respectively, and not merely the vower's own age-group, were divided into "talls" and "shorts" (see below), and served as soldiers or "police" during the dance, to enforce attendance, order in the buffalo hunt and so forth, is a point we could not clear up, but more probably only the members of his own age-group.

For either the vower's age-group, or perhaps, as just noted, all the Stars or Wolves respectively of which his age-group was a component sub-group, four head officers or "generals" or "lieutenants" were chosen, and also two subordinate officers or "servants" or attendants. The two tallest of the four head officers took the taller men of the age-group (or of the larger society, Stars or Wolves) as their soldiers, and one of the two subordinate officers; the two shortest, the shorter men, and the other subordinate officer. The two divisions, the "talls" and the "shorts," constituted the "soldiers" or "police" for the dance. Each division also had an outstanding old man as herald or crier.

After the people had all been gathered together, the first task was that of gathering food supplies, buffalo meat and particularly

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

Between times, during the summer months, that is, when no sacred dance was in progress, the two soldier societies, the Stars and the Grass dancers (Wolves), would compete with each other *in foot races or other sports* or in gambling bouts.[14] The losers would have to "cook" or to do other things for the winners. The losers in formation, with one of them in front carrying the Crazy Dance badger pelt trimmed and fixed up and tied to one end of a stick, might go to where the winners were sitting in a sort of semi-circle. On arrival there, the man carrying the pelt would say: "We are also bringing the badger pelt. It, too, we lost in the bet,"—although actually the pelt itself had not been wagered. This was a dare or challenge to the winners to put up the Crazy Lodge, a challenge which they were "compelled" to accept. Some great man among the winners would then get up, take the badger pelt from the man who brought it, and make an exclamation meaning that he was glad and that he accepted the challenge. He and his fellow-winners of the same age-group would then at once send criers to announce their acceptance of the challenge and, to give notice that they would without fail carry through their acceptance, would get in formation and sing. When the Crazy Dance was so carried out it had the same prestige and it was performed with the same rites and observances, as when carried out to fulfill a vow.

Each of those men who joined the Crazy Dance joined with one of his wives or with a substitute for her. The chief although not the only role of these women was participation in the ritual grandfather sex-test to be described later. Some husbands were so jealous of their wives that they would do all possible to avoid joining the dance or having their wives join. This appears to have been the case with the husbands of Coming Daylight, who was a belle in her day. In other cases, as The Boy remarked, "the husband knew his wife's character and disposition, and if she were weak he did not put her to this test as he would be pretty sure that she would fail." Singer had never joined although some wanted her to do so at the time. "My husband," she said, "was advised not to let me do so because I was too young and I might make

[14] Cf. Flannery, 1953, p. 42.